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TAGS: IS IR AF KPAL ETRD PREL

SUBJECT: PORTUGAL'S VIEWS ON THE MAY 14-15 FOREIGN  
MINISTERS MEETING (GAERC)

REF: SECSTATE 60948

Classified By: Dana M. Brown, Pol-Econ Officer, Embassy Lisbon  
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

**¶1.** (U) Portuguese Deputy EU Correspondent Ana Filomena Rocha responded to the reftel U.S. policy interests on the Balkans, Middle East, Africa, Iran, and EU-Russia. She also shared Portugal's views on the Italian initiative to introduce a draft UN Resolution against the death penalty.

**¶2.** (C) BALKANS: Portugal is concerned that Russia may veto a resolution to recognize Kosovo and thereby prompt Kosovo into unilaterally declaring independence. If that happened, Rocha speculated that the EU would not be able to reach a common position on whether to recognize Kosovo. She added that a unilateral declaration would set a dangerous precedent and could prompt others to skip UN consultations and attempt a unilateral solution.

**¶3.** (C) UZBEKISTAN: Rocha commented that Germany is pressing forward in an attempt to ease sanctions against Uzbekistan for its own economic gain. Portugal remains unconvinced that Uzbekistan is making any serious moves to improve the human rights situation and oppose lifting sanctions at this time.

**¶4.** (SBU) MIDDLE EAST: Portugal is reserving judgment on the Arab League initiative to create a new forum to engage the EU. In particular, Portugal would like to see an analysis of current EU-Middle East consultation mechanisms before contemplating a new process.

**¶5.** (C) SUDAN: Rocha noted that the Netherlands had added Sudan to the agenda but stated that it was unclear what exactly they wanted to discuss. She expressed frustration over the current impasse with Bashir and stressed that pressure has not been productive. Rocha reported that the EU will likely continue to fund assistance projects through the end of 2007 despite Bashir's resistance to implementing the hybrid force.

**¶6.** (C) SOMALIA: Rocha rated Germany's efforts to respond to the crisis in Somalia as "lackluster." In spite of EU calls for an all inclusive dialogue and general respect for human rights, Somalia is not moving in the right direction, according to Rocha. She hopes that the EU would begin to use its leverage as a donor bloc to press for advances soon.

**¶7.** (C) RUSSIA-EU: After noting that Portugal is fairly neutral on Russian issues, Rocha stressed that Estonia and select other members were attempting to hold the EU relationship with Russia hostage to nationalistic grudges. She underscored that Russia is of strategic importance to the entire EU and that the Eastern European nations that were slowing the dialogue were ultimately risking damage to their own reputation by letting national antipathy overshadow the Union's needs.

¶ 8. (C) DEATH PENALTY: While it was not mentioned in the demarche, Rocha raised Portugal's preoccupation regarding the Italian initiative on an EU-sponsored resolution against the death penalty. Portugal's main concern is that the measure does not have wide-spread interest and could spark controversy among partner nations, especially the United States. She stated frankly, "This is not a good time for the EU to introduce a measure that will start out controversial and end up defeated."

¶ 9. (C) Comment: Portugal has begun to focus on issues that will continue into its presidency. As a result, it is attempting to press through as many controversial measures as possible so it can address Portugal's key agenda issues from day one. End comment.

Hoffman